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U.S. Analysts Find New Soviet Radars, Possibly Complicating Arms-Pact Effort

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WASHINGTON—While Soviet arms negotiators are pressing to strengthen the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the U.S., American intelligence has discovered that Moscow is building two huge new missile-defense radars.

The discovery could complicate U.S.-Soviet efforts to hammer out new arms-control agreements because, some experts believe, the radars suggest that Moscow may be laying the foundation for a nationwide missile-defense system, which is banned by the ABM Treaty.

Whatever Moscow's intentions, the new radars would strengthen the hand of administration hard-liners who want to prevent arms-control agreements from limiting President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, the so-called Star Wars space defense plan.

No Violation by Themselves

Senior American officials say the new radar installations, the seventh and eighth of their kind, are located near the Soviet Union's western border and will be aimed toward the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Because they are on the country's periphery, the new radars by themselves don't violate the 1972 treaty as the U.S. charges a similar radar at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia does.

But if they turn out to be part of a nationwide ABM system, they would violate the 1972 treaty, which limits the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to two local defense systems. Some defense officials fear that the Soviets may be slowly building the pieces of a nationwide system.

"It certainly helps worst-case thinking along," says arms-control expert Michael Krepon of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

American intelligence analysts say the new radars fill the final gap in the Soviets' network of so-called Large, Phased-Array Radars, which are capable of detecting and tracking incoming ballistic missiles at great distances. But some U.S. officials say three existing radars, code-named Hen House, already can detect any ballistic missile attacks in the area. "These are very, very difficult to explain as early warning radars," an administration analyst says of the new radars.

Complicate U.S. Retaliation

Some officials fear that the Soviets, who already are strengthening an existing (and legal) missile-defense network around Moscow, might be able to deploy at least a crude nationwide missile-defense system quickly when the eight big phased array radars are operational, probably early in the 1990s.

The Soviets have developed smaller,

mobile battle-management radars, code-named Pawn Shop and Flat Twin, which take only six to eight weeks to be deployed. The U.S.S.R. also has begun production of a new, high-speed anti-missile missile for the Moscow missile-defense system and some U.S. officials worry that extra interceptors could be built covertly and stockpiled.

Though it would be crude, U.S. officials say, an ABM system constructed of these elements would complicate plans for any U.S. retaliatory strike on Soviet military targets.

But U.S. intelligence officials are divided on the important question of whether the new Soviet radars are designed to warn of incoming missiles, or also to help direct defenses to shoot them down. In Congressional testimony last year, Robert M. Gates, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said such large radars could help support a large anti-ballistic-missile system. But he noted that the installations, which are more than 150 yards long and more than nine stories tall, are vulnerable to attack and to the electronic effects of a nuclear blast.

Other experts argue that the eight big radars probably form an early warning network, which is permitted by the ABM Treaty, and note that the U.S. is upgrading its own radar defenses by building similar, though less powerful, phased array radars. "They're early warning radars," says Mr. Krepon.

Political Significance

But the evidence that the Soviets are expanding their radar network may have more political than military significance. At a minimum, it suggests that neither economic problems nor any desire for new arms agreements has slowed Soviet defense programs. James C. Linder of the Defense Intelligence Agency has estimated that the Soviets' large, phased array radars cost \$300 million to \$400 million each; other experts believe the cost may be twice that.

The discovery of the new radars also may help U.S. hard-liners revive the debate about whether the Soviets can be trusted to keep the arms-control agreements they sign. The Soviets, meanwhile, are likely to argue that the administration's policies, especially Mr. Reagan's Star Wars defense proposal and Washington's declaration that it no longer feels bound by a strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty, are forcing them to prepare for a possible U.S. decision to abandon the 1972 treaty.

Such mistrust can only make it harder for both sides to negotiate complex new arms-reduction agreements. "The worst-case analysis on both sides will be fed by this," says Mr. Krepon.

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